

LIST OF CURRENT CLAIMS

1. (Currently Amended) A supporting device for supporting insertion of a medical instrument into a human body, comprising:

a tubular member includes one of a tubular member engagement section and a tubular member alignment mark, the tubular member further includes an inner passageway between its opposite ends through which the medical instrument is capable of passing, wherein the tubular member is configured to guide the medical instrument into a digestive organ from an oral cavity through a pharynx, the tubular member is formed in a curved shape in advance to conform to the shape of pharynx, and the tubular member has a diameter that is larger than that of the pharynx to allow an expansion of the pharynx;

a reinforcement member formed by a thin plate extending along a perimeter of the inner passageway, and

a guiding member configured to guide the tubular member and the reinforcement member, the guiding member includes at least one of a guiding member engagement section and a guiding member alignment mark,

wherein the reinforcement element has curved shapes conformable to the shape of a pharynx of a human body ~~and, when inserted from an oral cavity into the pharynx and retained there,~~ the tubular member and the reinforcement element guide the medical instrument to the digestive organ through the inner passageway, ~~and such that~~ when the guiding member engagement section is engaged with the tubular member engagement section, or when the guiding member alignment mark and the tubular member alignment mark are aligned with each other, the digestive organ end of the guiding member is generally coincident with the digestive organ end of the tubular member.

2. (Currently Amended) A supporting device for supporting insertion of a medical instrument into a human body, comprising:

a tubular member includes one of a tubular member engagement section and a tubular member alignment mark, the tubular member further includes an inner passageway between its opposite ends through which the medical instrument is capable of passing, wherein the tubular member is configured to guide the medical instrument into a digestive organ from an

oral cavity through a pharynx, and the tubular member has a diameter that is larger than that of the pharynx to allow an expansion of the pharynx;

a reinforcement member extending along a perimeter of the inner passageway; and

a guiding member having a diameter smaller than the inner passageway and insertable from the oral cavity of a human body into the pharynx, the guiding member is configured to guide the tubular member and the reinforcement member and includes at least one of a guiding member engagement section and a guiding member alignment mark,

wherein the guiding member is inserted from the oral cavity into the pharynx prior to an insertion of the tubular member, and the guiding member guiding, when inserted into the pharynx, the tubular member and the reinforcement member from the oral cavity to the pharynx,

wherein, ~~when guided to the pharynx and retained there,~~ the tubular member and the reinforcement member guide the medical instrument to a digestive organ through the inner passageway, ~~and~~ such that when the guiding member engagement section is engaged with the tubular member engagement section, or when the guiding member alignment mark and the tubular member alignment mark are aligned with each other, the digestive organ end of the guiding member is generally coincident with the digestive organ end of the tubular member.

3. (Cancelled)

4. (Previously Presented) The supporting device of claim 1, wherein the reinforcement member has the shape of a spiral continuously extending in a center line direction of the inner passageway.

5. (Previously Presented) The supporting device of claim 1, wherein a digestive organ end of the tubular member extends toward a digestive organ ahead of a digestive organ end of the reinforcement member.

6. (Previously Presented) The supporting device of claim 1, wherein the digestive organ end of the tubular member is slanted with respect to the center line of the inner passageway.

7. (Previously Presented) The supporting device of claim 1, wherein the tubular member is molded with the reinforcement member buried therein.

8 - 9. (Cancelled)

10. (Previously Presented) The supporting device of claim 3, wherein:  
the tubular member is made of a resin material; and  
the guiding member is made of another resin material harder than the resin material of the tubular member.